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THE POETRY OF THE AMERICAN PLANTATIONS.

Part II.

MRS. BRADSTREET was not the only poet of her family, or the only woman poet of early New England. Her father's poetical exercises have been mentioned. Her sister, the wife of Rev. John Woodbridge, also wrote verse, and we shall later have to reckon with the gentle muse of Mrs. Jane Turell. Here we may as well reckon with the Boanergean muse of Capt. Edward Johnson, although we might as logically consider that very pedestrian maiden in connection with the worthy captain's prose treatise with the "wonder-working" title. Capt. Johnson's verses were mainly panegyrical; but when he made his "Cry unto the Lord to stay his Hand," he could truly say of his lamentations over various "miscarriages" in the New England he loved so sturdily and so well:

My wailing muse her woful work begins.

Of his panegyrical effusions, the lines upon John Winthrop, Esq., chosen Governor in 1631, are fairly typical, and the friendly familiarity with which they open should perhaps disarm criticism:

Why leavest thou, John, thy station, in Suffolk, thy own soil?
Christ will have thee a pillar be; for 's people thou must toil.
He chang'd thy heart, then take his part 'gainst prelates proud invading
His kingly throne, set up alone, in wilderness there shading
His little flocks from Prelates' knocks, . . . etc.

One wonders whether Winthrop, on reading these verses, did not indeed ask himself why he had left Suffolk.

The octosyllabics of John Josselyn, in his "New England's Rarities Discovered," are so little like the usual strains of the Puritan mood (in fact, he had slight sympathy with the saints, among whom he made no permanent sojourn) that they take us in imagination out of New England entirely. Could a Puritan have written a description of an Indian

beauty, and “conferred” a poem upon her? As well expect that George Alsop, who must have had some of the “lofty virtues” of the Marylanders he described, should have celebrated in verse, instead of satirizing as he did, the achievements of Oliver Cromwell. As well expect that Nathaniel Bacon, “General by consent of the people,” should have been suffered to depart this life without a eulogy and an execration. If the sturdy rebel had gone to his unknown grave without the “Epitaph made by his man,” the poetry of the American Plantations would have been shorn of its chief—nay, its only—jewel. For in this epitaph we have what is in all probability the single poem in any true sense—*i. e.*, the single product of sustained poetic art—that was written in America for a hundred and fifty years after the settlement of Jamestown. The twenty-two couplets would not have made Marvell blush had he been taxed with them. They were certainly worthy of a minor Elizabethan, like George Daniel, of Beswick. It is the irony of fate that this devoted follower, who in a more favorable environment might have added another name to the galaxy of the Caroline poets, should have left behind him not only no other traceable verses, but not even an ascertainable name. But he has left his poem, which produced a satiric answer of some strength, and he accomplished his purpose of defending worthily his master’s enigmatic character. Whether we agree or not with his delineation of that character, we cannot deny the poetic power of the following lines:

In a word,
Mars and Minerva both in him concurred
For arts, for arms, whose pen and sword alike,
As Cato’s did, may admiration strike
Into his foes; while they confess withal
It was their guilt styled him a criminal.

If that underrated poet, John Cleveland, could have been raised from the dead and transported to Virginia, to become Bacon’s “man” as thoroughly as he had been Charles’s man in England, he could have equaled these strong verses, but could hardly have surpassed them.

Returning now to New England, and gathering up some

loose threads of elegy, we may mention the tributes paid to Hooker by Ezekiel Rogers, Peter Bulkley, and Elijah Corlet—some of them in Latin—as well as the often quoted lines of Benjamin Woodbridge (Harvard's first graduate, who afterwards returned to England) on John Cotton—that

living, breathing Bible; tables where
Both covenants at large engraven were.

John Norton too wrote verse as well as prose about Cotton, but he is not the John Norton who, as we have seen, chanted the praises of Mrs. Bradstreet. Roger Williams himself wrote some simple verses among his other works, and simplicity is likewise a characteristic, rare at the time, of Jonathan Mitchell's elegy upon the heterodox President Dunster. Another President of Harvard, the Lactantius of New England, as he was styled, Urian Oakes, has left an elegy upon the Rev. Thomas Shepard, which can hardly be called simple. It is a rather belated product of the Fantastic School, and scarcely seems to deserve the enthusiastic praise Prof. Tyler has given it. It is certainly true, however, that in its fifty-two six-lined stanzas verses, and even whole stanzas, may be found that do not lack power. Pathos too is present, but beauty and charm are, in my judgment, conspicuous for their absence; yet these are the very qualities most essential to a successful elegy. Nevertheless the poem is certainly the most elaborate of its kind produced in New England at this period, and it deserves perusal and remembrance if only for this striking couplet:

Hee's gone, alas! Down in the dust must ly
As much of this rare person as could dy.

The successor of Oakes in the presidency of Harvard was that John Rogers who described the effects of Mrs. Bradstreet's poetry upon himself in such a vigorous way. His panegyric is perhaps chiefly remarkable for its reliance upon the classic rather than the Hebrew muse. Were men chafing under Puritanism already, or did a college president consider himself entitled to such an academic recreation as twice walking "through the muses' grove" and talking with the

“nymphs of Helicon?” At least, however, he saved his own reputation and the posthumous fame of Mrs. Bradstreet by asserting:

To Venus' shrine no altars raised are,
Nor venom'd shafts from painted quiver fly.

From elegies scriptural and academic it is a relief to turn to the “homely” verses of Franklin’s maternal grandfather, Peter Folger, whose “Looking-Glass for the Times” was published in 1677. This poet and his work are the Orm and the “Ormulum” of America. I believe Mr. Sweet did discover one mildly poetical passage about a lamb in the “Ormulum;” the “Looking-Glass” of Folger has not dazzled my eyes with a single poetic ray. Folger, nevertheless, appears to be quite Orm’s equal in garrulous naïveté, although not so meticulously careful about his spelling. A good deal must be pardoned, however, to such a sturdy champion of liberty of conscience. To his liberal grandson his ancestor’s poem appeared to be written “with a manly freedom and a pleasing simplicity,” and if we disassociate from the epithet “pleasing” all notion of charm, this estimate of the poem by a thoroughly unpoetical character may be allowed to stand.

Passing over the Danforths, father and son, the former being rather known for his astronomical and theological dealings with the comet of 1664 than for any dealings with the sun of poetry, we come to our first native-born bard, the “learned schoolmaster and physician, and ye renowned poet of New England,” as he is styled on his tombstone, Benjamin Thompson. This worthy was born at Braintree, Mass., in 1642; he died at Roxburgh in 1714—“*Mortuus sed immortalis*,” as his epitaph declared. His immortality depends rather upon his primacy of birth than upon the imperishable character of his “New England’s Crisis,” an epic of King Philip’s war. Still, it is interesting to note that this scion of a new generation shows in his style and versification that, however much he might lament the increasing “luxury” of the times and the falling away from the sturdy, homely virtues of the fathers and mothers in Israel, the

world moved on in the seventeenth century just as it does in the nineteenth. Waller had crossed the Atlantic, and the day of Quarles and Sylvester was over. The monotonous versification and inflated style of the eighteenth century are already upon us—not in full force, it is true, for Thompson does not lack a certain homeliness of phrase and of humor, as can be plainly seen in his description of the women fortifying Boston Neck.¹

But if Thompson is our first native poet and a precursor of poetic change, Michael Wigglesworth is surely the typical poet of Puritan New England. Although born in England, in 1631, he was enough of an American to receive his bachelor's degree at Harvard twenty years later. Naturally, he entered the ministry, and with his fellows he cultivated the muse. Weak health frequently interrupted his labors of whatever kind, but led to his study of medicine—a pursuit which proved more of a boon to others than to himself. It is perhaps hard to associate the depicter of the gruesome horrors of the Day of Doom with a sociable, mild-mannered invalid, loved by all who knew him. But an orthodox Calvinistic theology did not dry up in Wigglesworth, any more than in John Eliot and many another Puritan, the milk of human kindness. It is true that to our modern notions there is no great welling of this milk even in the famous stanzas that mitigate the doom of the unregenerate infants, but we must remember not to intrude our modern notions upon the Puritan classic that was long so popular in New England. "The Day of Doom; or, A Poetical Description of the Great and Last Judgment" first appeared in 1682, and consisted of a poetical version, after Sternhold and Hopkins, of the texts of Scripture having reference to the awful, but to the Puritan mind congenial, subject. There is not a little curious ingenuity to be discovered here and there in the over

¹Prof. Tyler says that a most diligent search has failed to bring to light a copy of Thompson's book. The selections of his work usually quoted are taken from Kettell's "Specimens of American Poetry," and these mainly show, as Prof. Tyler observes, a satiric vein. No one knows what has become of Kettell's copy.

two hundred stanzas that make up this New England "Inferno." That it is quaint and readable, and that it contains descriptive stanzas that come near being real poetry, need hardly be urged; nor need we cite more than a few lines from a poem so often quoted by writers upon our early literature. No quotation of moderate length can, however, do justice to that cleverly sophistical speech of Wigglesworth's God to the "Reprobate Infants"—a speech that concludes as follows:

You sinners are, and such a share
as sinners may expect,
Such you shall have; for I do save
none but my own elect.
Yet to compare your sin with their
who liv'd a longer time,
I do confess yours is much less,
though every sin's a crime.

A crime it is, therefore in bliss
you may not hope to dwell;
But unto you I shall allow
the easiest room in Hell.

Even thus it is that the shivers of one generation become the smiles of the next.

But although "The Day of Doom" is Wigglesworth's masterpiece, his stanzas entitled "Vanity of Vanities," which were appended to the sixth edition of the former poem (1715) ten years after the writer's death, are decidedly better proof of the amiable divine's real poetical capacity. They are naturally lugubrious, and they are in that elegiac quatrain which Davenant and Dryden had already used with effect. In versification and diction they are far above the usual level of New England verse, and they have a strength and terseness which, if derived from Dryden, are nevertheless refreshing. Take, for example, this stanza:

If Beauty should the Beautiful defend
From Death's dominion, then fair Absalom
Had not been brought to such a shameful end;
But fair and foul unto the grave must come.

Besides the poems named, Wigglesworth—who wrote more verse than any of his contemporaries save Mrs. Bradstreet—

was the author of two poems of considerable length: one, "God's Controversy with New England," written at the time of the great drought of 1662, in a style that can be guessed at; the other, "Meat out of the Eater," in which, to quote Prof. Tyler, "we have simply the Christian doctrine of comfort in sorrow, translated into metrical jingles." The latter was a very popular production, and contained at least one spark of poetry:

War ends in peace, and morning light
Mounts upon midnight's wing.

More than a single spark of poetry can be found in "A Funeral Song," which one of Wigglesworth's sons, Samuel by name, wrote when a youth of twenty to commemorate the death of a friend, Nathaniel Clarke, who died at sea.¹ Prof. Tyler deserves thanks for having laid stress on the beauty of the closing stanzas of this poem, which are certainly touching. Whether young Wigglesworth would have developed into a poet if he had given his fancy free wing, instead of settling down into the routine life of a country parson, is, of course, a matter of unimportant speculation. But surely the gentle son should be remembered along with the father, who has enveloped his equally gentle nature in such a sulphurous halo.

The fact that Cotton Mather preached Wigglesworth's funeral sermon and wrote his epitaph reminds us that we have come full upon that portentous figure and his still more portentous "Magnalia." It is only as a poet and as a collector of the poetical remains of other divines that we can here reckon with this Charlemagne of the Mather dynasty. Elegiac and encomiastic verse was, of course, his forte, and some of it is curiously simple, considering the usually turgid character of his piety and his scholarship. The stanzas on his son and daughter are totally void of conceit, and the

¹It is curious to notice how the death of friends at sea has inspired elegiac poets. Archilochus, Propertius, Milton, Wigglesworth, is a queer list, to which such names as those of Turberville, William Browne of Tavistock, and others can easily be added.

couplets on his wife, Abigail, are admirably lucid and sincere. They do not rise into the sphere of pure poetry, as does the epitaph on Bacon, but they charm in a negative way by their utter lack of the rotund extravagance and bathos of the typical memorial verse of the period—such verse, for example, as Mather himself wrote to embalm the memories of John Wilson and William Thompson; such verse, also, as Nicholas Noyes wrote upon the death of the same Mrs. Abigail Mather. Noyes, however, had a certain amount of originality and quaintness of expression that makes him more readable than many of his brother bards. These lines, from the “Consolatory Poem” to Cotton Mather, are not unamusing:

Where canker'd breasts with envy broil,
And smooth tongues are but dipt in oil;
And Cain's club only doth lie by
For want of opportunity.
Yea, who would live among catarrhs,
Contagions, pains, and strifes, and wars,
That might go up above the stars,
And live in health, and peace, and bliss,
Had in that world, but wish'd in this?

Noyes seems to have been a sort of past master in the fast-decaying art of writing punning elegies. His lines on Rev. Joseph Green are a model of their happily defunct kind. He was also among the poets who complimented Mather on his “*Magnalia*,” as was our native-born bard, Benjamin Thompson, as well as Timothy Woodbridge, the brother of Cotton's eulogist. Other occasional poets of the period are; Daniel Gookin, Jr., who lamented Urian Oakes; Mrs. Sarah Kemble Knight, who dropped into verse in her “*Journals*,” Judge Samuel Sewall, the diarist, whose “*Hymn for the New Year*” (1701) has the merit of simplicity; and finally, without any attempt to exhaust them, John Hawkins, who has the following good epigram attributed to him and inspired by Providence:

Lord, are not ravens daily fed by thee?
And wilt thou clothe the lilies, and not me?
Begone distrust, I shall have clothes and bread
While lilies flourish and the birds are fed.

An occasional poet is, perhaps, all that we can call Ebenezer Cook, who in his "Sot-Weed Factor" (1708) satirized the commercial shrewdness of the Quakers and the administration of the law in Maryland. Nothing whatever is known of this satirist, who nevertheless had a little Hudibrastic humor, which, lest it should go begging, is thrown in here to help out the New England stock. Equally unknown is the author of the popular ballad entitled "Lovewell's Fight;" but it is easy to see that even had the production of ballads in New England gone on in geometrical progression, the time needed for the evolution of an "Iliad," or even a "Chevy Chase," would have been about equal in extent to the æons needed, as astronomers tell us, in order to transmit to this little world of ours the light of some of the fixed stars. It is uncertain whether it was the recognition of this fact that prompted Major General, Chief Justice, and Governor Roger Wolcott, of Connecticut, to write an artificial epic on the obtaining of a charter for his native colony by John Winthrop the Younger. He modestly called it "A Brief Account," and had the grace to keep it in manuscript, his only published work in verse being a worthless volume of "Meditations." It is, however, indisputable that this poem (for the possession of which our thanks are due to the Massachusetts Historical Society) marks the fact that the influence of Alexander Pope had come to America to make a long sojourn. Indeed, an acquaintance of Pope's, and the author of a commendatory poem upon his work, was even now living at Watertown in the person of Francis Knapp. Pope's influence has been responsible for a good deal of sad stuff in the way of metrical composition, but for nothing worse than the long speech in Wolcott's poem, in which Winthrop ascribes to Charles II. the planting and early history of Connecticut. What is one to say of a poet who makes a ship's captain, during the approach of a storm, exclaim to his crew?—

Now all from safe recumbency arise!

Or what is one to say of the propriety of this speech made by an Indian chief to the first invaders of his soil?—

Now drop your anchors and unbend your sails;
 And if for peace and friendship you are come,
 And do desire this land shall be your home,
 Let some of your chief leaders come to land,
 And now with me join their right hand to hand.

But not even these charming touches, not even the classical allusions, not even the remarkable similes introduced by our author, can equal his description of Mason's assault upon the Indian village in the Pequot War. Witness these lines, with which we may well take leave of Wolcott:

After so many deaths and dangers past,
 Mason was thoroughly inflam'd at last;
 He snatched a blazing bavin with his hand,
 And fir'd the stately palace with the brand.
 And soon the towering and rapacious flame
 All hope of opposition overcame.
 Eurus and Notus readily subjoin
 Their best assistance to this great design;
 Drive pitchy flames in vast enfoldings down,
 And dreadful globes of fire along the town.

 The town, its wealth, high battlements and spires,
 Now sinketh, weltering in conjoining fires.

But we are fortunately able to complete this sketch of the poetry of the Plantations with pleasanter figures than Roger Wolcott. We can actually afford to linger for a moment over the serious verses of Mrs. Jane Turell and her father and of Rev. John Adams, even if the humorous skits of John Seccomb demand no further notice than the statement that their publication in England can have done no good to the literary reputation of infant America.¹

Mrs. Jane Turell was the only daughter of Rev. Dr. Benjamin Coleman, himself the author, among other verses, of a poem on Elijah's translation, in which he unconsciously sounded the praises of Alexander Pope by imitating him, while consciously sounding the praises of Rev. Samuel Willard by coupling his name with that of the prophet. His daughter Jane inherited his poetical talents, and, like him, chose scriptural subjects and owned the sway of Pope. She

¹See his doggerel "Father Abbey's Will" in 2 Stedman-Hutchinson.

was catholic enough, too, to admire Waller, on whom she wrote a glowing eulogy, praising his politics as well as his poetry, which is remarkable in a fair Puritan, and she even went so far as to apostrophize Sir Richard Blackmore as follows:

Blackmore, thou wondrous bard! whose name inspires
My glowing breast to imitate thy fires.

One feels a sympathy with Mrs. Bradstreet, laboring under the influence of Sylvester; what must one not feel for an amiable young woman laboring under the influence of Blackmore? It is true that in one of her poems she expresses the wish to burn with Sappho's "noble fire" ("but not like her for faithless man expire"), and to rival great "Orinda's fame;" but it is to be feared that her intimacy with Blackmore has brought a blight upon her and her works. Her life, at any rate, was exemplary, and, although she died early, she did not expire on account of any faithless man, for her husband, Rev. Ebenezer Turell, published her memoirs and poetical remains the very year she died (1735).

Rev. John Adams is connected with her fame through his lines "To the Rev. Mr. Turell, on the Death of His Virtuous Consort." His verses are neither above nor below the typical couplets of the period, nor do his other poems give us any impression concerning their author save that he had a facility for versifying and moralizing. He was a clergyman at Newport, R. I., and was pious enough to write an "Address to the Supreme Being for His Assistance in my Poetical Compositions." The divine help is not very apparent in his work to our profane modern eyes, unless it be in the choice of the book of Revelation as a subject for paraphrase, to which we are, however, heathen enough to prefer Mr. Adams's translation of the First Ode of Horace.

Another divine of eighteenth-century New England, a very different sort of man from the quiet and scholarly John Adams, is the famous punster Mather Byles, who, while falling in part outside our period (he died in 1788, in his eighty-second year), nevertheless as a serious bard falls to our lot. Byles, as Prof. Tyler has well shown, was much more than

a humorous parson with a big wig; he was a moving preacher, and the way he cowed his congregation when they remonstrated against his loyalty to George III. shows that he was in some respects a great man. But his serious poetry, as represented by his description, in Popian couplets, of the Last Judgment, under the appropriate title of "The Conflagration," surpasses in excellence the epic strains of Roger Wolcott only to a very slight degree. His "Elegy Addressed to Governor Belcher on the Death of His Lady" is little or no better, and it is only when he tries the ballad form or the hymn form, as in the lines "Written During a Voyage," that he attains even a mediocre success. The latter poem gave his contemporary, Joseph Green, an opportunity to indulge his not inconsiderable talent for humorous verse, so that Byles may be fairly considered as a very public-spirited manufacturer of verses. Green, his rival, is best remembered to-day by his not unfacetious "Mournful Lamentation for the Sad and Deplorable Death of Mr. Old Tenor"—a skit on the paper currency of the time, which has been paralleled in our own period by some well-known lines on a Confederate note. He also rivaled Gray, and relieved his friend Byles of the duty, by writing an elegy on the latter's favorite cat. Altogether, Green is an interesting figure—which is something that can be said as well of the famous almanac purveyor, Nathaniel Ames. This long-lived humorist, measuring by the number of his almanacs, managed, besides serving the inhabitants of Dedham, Mass., as physician and innkeeper, to write occasionally a few lines of poetry, as can be discovered by any one who will read in the "Library of American Literature" the verses on the "Waking of the Sun," taken from the almanac for 1739. With Ames we may couple another physician, John Osborn, of Middletown, Conn., whose "Whaling Song" is almost as original and good as his "Elegiac Epistle" to one of his sisters on the death of another is imitative and bad. Osborn had tried to become a preacher, but had failed on account of his supposed heterodox views; that he might have become a poet, and perhaps a whaler, let these stanzas testify:

When eastward, clear of Newfoundland,
We stem the frozen pole,
We see the icy islands stand,
The northern billows roll.

We view the monsters of the deep,
Great whales in numerous swarms;
And creatures there that play and leap,
Of strange, unusual forms.

As Louisburg was captured in 1744, we are perhaps in duty bound to mention John Maylem's martial poem on that subject, although it was not published until 1758, the year that likewise saw the appearance of his "Gallic Perfidy." An increased patriotism, a national self-consciousness, is becoming noticeable in the literature of the period, and is one of the reasons why our line of demarcation is drawn at the middle of the century; and this patriotism, together with an unruly bellicosity, overflows in Maylem's crude verses. That poetry and patriotism need not necessarily flourish together, however, will be made clear by the following quotation from the "Conquest of Louisburg," which is respectfully referred to the grammarians:

And now the drums beat up, and now appears,
With hearts elate, twelve thousand volunteers.

Our chronological limits prevent us from considering the verses of that exemplary Boston physician, Dr. Benjamin Church, fine patriot though he was—perhaps he wished to exculpate himself for the share he took in the "Pietas et Gratulatio Collegii Cantabrigiensis apud Novanglos," a belated imitation of the customary academic tributes of Oxford and Cambridge on the death of one sovereign (George II.) and the accession of another (George III.)—or those of James Allen on the Boston massacre, prelude as they are to his never-published epic of "Bunker Hill." These poets lie too near Trumbull, Hopkinson, and other Revolutionary bards for us to touch them; yet who could forbear, logic or no logic, to quote these lines from the "Massacre?"

"Ye miscreant troops, begone! Our presence fly;
Stay if ye dare, but if ye dare, ye die!"
"Ah! too severe," the fearful chief replies,
"Permit one-half, the other instant flies!"—

"No parle, avaunt or, by our fathers' shades,
 Your reeking lives shall glut our vengeful blades;
 Ere morning's light begone, or else, we swear,
 Each slaughtered corse shall feed the birds of air."

This heroic colloquy between the "sacred senate" of Boston and Gen. Gage is hardly an appropriate transition link by which to attach our thoughts to the "Philosophic Solitude; or, The Choice of a Rural Life," a somewhat lengthy poem published in 1747 by William Livingston, afterwards Governor of New Jersey and an important statesman of the Revolution. Still, we must get out of New England, and we cannot arrive at the small knot of Philadelphia poets without at least pausing to mention the existence of a young disciple of Pope in New York, for Livingston was then practising law in that city. A perusal of a few of his couplets will dispel any doubts as to the propriety of his conduct when he devoted himself to politics, and will justify us in hastening on.

We have already had occasion to mention the fact that, even if we had to deal with Franklin, his career would practically fall outside our limits; but some of the young associates he drew around him during his early years in Philadelphia will deserve a few words, especially since they have been made famous by him in his "Autobiography."

Aquila Rose, printer and poet, had died before Franklin applied to Samuel Keimer, printer and elegist of Rose, for work in their common trade. Rose had a slight capacity for occasional verse—a capacity which seems to have descended to other members of the small Philadelphia group—such as George Webb, who wrote a poem, published by Franklin, on a club house or "Bachelor's Hall," and Joseph Breintnal, as well as Joseph Shippen, Nathaniel Evans, and Thomas Godfrey, the two latter of whom will be mentioned again shortly. But none of these men had such a career as that James Ralph, who went to England with Franklin, and there became a fairly successful and notorious hack writer, important in the early annals of newspaper editing.¹

Ralph's chief title to present fame lies in the fact that, be-

¹ See Leslie Stephen's "Studies of a Biographer," I., 57 seq.

sides figuring in Franklin's "Autobiography" (not very creditably), he is mentioned twice in the "Dunciad" (I., 216; III., 165, 166). He had written a poem on Night and a squib on Pope and Swift, but the former paid him off when he wrote:

Silence, ye wolves, while Ralph to Cynthia howls,
And makes Night hideous; answer him, ye owls.

It may have been spleen against Pope, or it may have been innate poetic taste, that led Ralph, in his next poem, "Zeuma, or the Love of Liberty"—a Peruvian epic in three books—to imitate Milton's blank verse rather than Pope's couplets. Whatever the reason, he certainly deserves the credit, rarely or never given him, of having thrown in his lot with Thomson and Dyer and the few other poets who were restive under Pope's supremacy. "Zeuma" appeared in 1729, only two years after Thomson's "Spring" had thrown down the gauntlet of blank verse. No one reads Ralph's epic to-day; but then few read "Leonidas" or the other epics of the century; and whatever one may say of Ralph's character, it can hardly be denied that in the specimens of his epic that the anthologists have given us there are not a few lines of merit. It is true that in the third book the imitation of Milton is so close as to be amusing, but one can hardly laugh at such lines as these:

For there soft pleasures, in eternal rounds,
Forever circle with an easy wing.

Nicholas Scull, who wrote some octosyllabics on the French and Indian War, falls outside our limits, as do the anonymous authors of epitaphs on Braddock and Wolfe and of the "Song of Braddock's Men;" fairly good work though they did, considering their environment. We are likewise precluded from discussing Nathaniel Evans, who died too young to show what might be done with his mild poetic talents, as well as Evans's friend, Thomas Godfrey, son of the mathematician. Godfrey, merely as the author of a few light lyrics, or of his more ambitious and imitative "Court of Fancy," would not interest us much; but as the author of our first poetic drama, "The Prince of Parthia," and as a

youth cut off in the flush of his ambitions, he naturally appeals to us. Still, the main thing to notice with him and with all these Pennsylvania poets is that they are lighter of touch than their New England compeers; that in their imitativeness they are more aspiring—they try the ode of Gray, they show the influence of Collins—that they even branch out into paths hitherto untried in their native land. They display, too, an increasing attachment to their city and colony, and give slight yet plain indications that while still provincials they are also Americans in embryo.

We have now sketched the history of American verse from the planting of Jamestown to the year 1749, when the French began to make serious trouble west of the Alleghanies. From this time to the outbreak of the Revolution we find a slowly growing bond of union, which so differentiates the literature, the politics, the social life of the period from all that had gone before that it seems best to draw a rough line at the year indicated instead of at the year 1676, as is sometimes done. While the historian's or the critic's lines are always more or less arbitrary, they are nevertheless useful. So in the present case to draw no line at all until our colonial period is finished would be to fail to perceive that the literature represented by Franklin is, in many important respects, a different product from that represented by the Mathers; and to draw a line at 1676 is to fail to perceive that the literature represented by the Mathers is not in any essential respect a different product from that represented by Mrs. Bradstreet or John Winthrop. Within our period, however, the body of literature, in verse as well as in prose, is fairly uniform in its imitative features, in its almost total lack of genuine merit, and in the fidelity with which it represents the character of the two classes of people that settled in the two main groups of colonies. It is not worth any man's while to read unless he be a professed student of the history of literature, but I trust that a few persons at least may conclude that it is worth reading about. W. P. TRENT.